

On the name of a race of *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* (Stanley)

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In most recent discussions in the periodic literature on the subspecies of the Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* (Stanley) of Ethiopian Africa, the name *Buphagus erythrorhynchus caffer* Grote, 1927: Palala R., border of Waterberg and Potgietersrus districts, Transvaal, has been used for the populations which range from the Republic of South Africa, northwards through the interior of the continent to northern Tanzania and Kenya. The fact that *caffer* is antedated by the much earlier *Buphaga Africanoides* A. Smith, 1831: Natal (*vide South African Quarterly Journal*, No. V, October, 1831, p. 12) seems to have been overlooked hitherto by workers.

There is no doubt that Smith's *B. Africanoides* is correctly applied to this species of oxpecker, as the original description is diagnostic. The bill is described as being between crimson and scarlet in colour, the legs and toes as black, and the eye-wattles as yellow. Smith comments that it "inhabits the country about Natal, and is commonly seen picking insects from the backs of cattle".

The present race *B. e. caffer*, as defined in the recent revisions of the races of the Red-billed Oxpecker by Clancey and Lawson, in *Bull. B.O.C.*, vol. lxxxi, 7, 1961, pp. 128-131, and Clancey, *Bull. B.O.C.*, vol. lxxxii, 1, 1962, pp. 19, 20, now becomes *B. e. africanoides* Smith, 1831: Natal, with *B. e. caffer* Grote, 1927: described from the Transvaal placed as a straight synonym.

When Smith visited Natal in the early part of last century the Red-billed Oxpecker was an abundant resident species feeding on the dermal parasites and lymph of both game animals and domestic stock. Elimination of the game and the regular dipping of stock animals have altered all that, and today the species is very local and uncommon in the province to the south of the Tugela R., which region constitutes the "Natal" of Smith's time.

